



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of California

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END OF RECENT OPERATION ANNOUNCED

State and Federal Charges Filed for Sexual Exploitation of Minors

FRESNO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott and area law enforcement officials announced today the results of a recent month-long multi-agency enforcement operation that targeted persons responsible for the sexual exploitation of minors. Coordinated under the auspices of the United States Department of Justice Project Safe Childhood program, the local enforcement—Operation Valley Predator II—involved state and federal parole and probation searches and compliance checks, the execution of new state and federal search warrants, resulting in state and federal criminal charges being filed against numerous individuals.

During the operation, which took place from July 27, 2008, through August 22, 2008, teams of law enforcement officers from more than 22 federal, state, and local agencies throughout the Central Valley made contact with 377 individuals, executed at least 19 state and federal search warrants, and arrested 61 persons on a variety of offenses ranging from child pornography crimes to failing to comply with state-mandated sex offender registration statutes. Thus far at least 15 federal criminal complaints and/or indictments have been filed against 16 individuals for federal crimes that include distribution, receipt, and possession of child pornography, using the Internet to entice a minor to engage in criminal sexual conduct, and using the Internet to transmit obscene matter to a minor under age 16. Additional charges may be filed once forensic analysis of computers and other evidence is completed. Several persons who have been arrested may face state prosecution by local district attorneys. Several cases have involved both state and federal prosecutions.

The United States Attorney's Office in Fresno coordinated Operation Valley Predator II with the Fresno Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. The ICAC Task Force includes the Madera, Clovis, Kingsburg, Tulare, Dinuba, Exeter, Lindsay, Reedley, Chowchilla, Woodlake, Sanger, and Farmersville Police Departments, Coalinga State Hospital Police Services, Tulare County District Attorney's Office, Madera County Sheriff's Department, and the Fresno County Sheriff's Department.

Numerous additional agencies participated in the enforcement operation, including the FBI Cyber Crimes Task Force (consisting of the FBI's Fresno office, Fresno Police Department, United States Secret Service, and Calif. Department of Justice), United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the United States Marshals Service, Calif. State Parole, Tulare County Sexual Assault Felony Enforcement Team (SAFE), United States Probation Office, Porterville Police Department, Kings County Sheriff's Department, the Kings County District Attorney's Office, the Madera County Sheriff's Department, the Merced County Sheriff's and District Attorney's Office, the Fresno County District Attorney's Office, and the FBI Offices in Modesto and Bakersfield.

According to court documents, some of the individuals facing federal charges include:

1. AARON CLARK, 19, and DIANA ORANTES, 20, of Porterville, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography. Both defendants admitted that they downloaded and viewed child pornography videos, some depicting children as young as five years of age and acted out fantasies connected to the sexual abuse of minors.
2. DIMITRIOS KASTIS, 53, of Whitestone, New York, charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography. He is also facing charges in the California Superior Court, Fresno County, related to the molestation of minor females in Clovis, Calif. A computer was seized during the course of the child molestation investigation, and a forensic review of its contents revealed images of child pornography.
3. JEFFREY ALAN BROHN, 42, of Flushing, Mich., charged with using facilities of interstate commerce to persuade, induce, or coerce a minor to engage in criminal sexual conduct and for traveling from La Crosse, Wis. to Tulare, Calif. to engage in sexual activity with a minor.
4. ROBIN BLAKE, 52, of Merced, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography. He was the "2001 Realtor of the Year" in Merced County and is currently the President of the Merced County Association of Realtors. In addition to the federal charges, BLAKE pleaded guilty on July 21, 2008, in the Merced County Superior Court to exhibiting harmful matter to a minor and was sentenced to probation.
5. THEODORE MEEKER, 66, of Fresno, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography. He previously was sentenced on April 3, 2008 in the Fresno County Superior Court to seven months and one week in jail for oral copulation of a minor. A computer was seized during the course of the child molestation investigation, and a forensic review of its contents revealed images of child pornography.
6. RALPH ANTHONY MALDONADO, 19, of Fresno, Calif. charged with using a computer, a webcam, and the Internet to transmit obscene images to minors he believed to be under age 16.
7. JEFFREY SCOTT WINKLER, 37, of Hanford, Calif., charged with violation of his supervised release, by using the Internet to create a Web site containing pictures of young children. He posed as a female photographer and talent scout and convinced a mother in Pennsylvania to take pictures of her naked daughter and send them to WINKLER in California.
8. KEVIN STANLEY, 33, of Earlimart, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography.
9. ROBERT BOREL, 48, of Madera, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography.
10. JUSTIN DYLAN GIPSON, 30, of Hanford, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography.
11. CHARLES McCARTY, 60, of Fresno, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography.

12. LARRY OCHOA, 32, of Dinuba, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography.
13. CHRISTOPHER RENG, 49, of Visalia, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography.
14. THOMAS BONES, 46, of Fresno, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography.
15. MICHAEL HOLLIS, 50, of Bakersfield, Calif., charged with receipt/distribution and possession of child pornography. FBI offices in South Jersey, Oklahoma City, and Houston sent leads to the Bakersfield FBI office regarding the defendant's distribution of child pornography via the Limewire peer-to-peer file sharing program.

Project Safe Childhood is designed to increase federal prosecutions of violent sexual predators and to reduce incidences of Internet crimes against children, including child pornography trafficking and online sexual solicitation of minors. In this nationwide initiative, United States Attorney Offices have teamed with federal, state, and local agencies to enhance law enforcement presence on the Internet. Additionally, efforts are underway to reach out to community groups and schools in order to inform parents and their children about how to use the Internet safely, thereby reducing the chances minors will fall prey to online sexual predators. PSC seeks to build upon its ongoing efforts to protect children from online exploitation and abuse.

United States Attorney Scott stated, "This extensive operation amply demonstrates that federal, state, and local agencies in the Central Valley will vigorously investigate and prosecute people who exploit innocent children."

"ICE's mission is to ensure the safety and security of the American people, and no segment of our society is more important or more potentially vulnerable than our nation's children," said Daniel R. Lane, assistant special agent in charge for the ICE office of investigations in Sacramento. "ICE is working closely with its law enforcement partners to identify and bring to justice sexual predators like these who prey upon young people, often leaving the victims emotionally and physically scarred for life. We will continue to aggressively pursue those who perpetrate these types of crimes. Our children deserve nothing less."

For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit the PSC Web site at www.projectsafechildhood.gov or call the PSC coordinators for the Eastern District of Calif.: Assistant United States Attorney David Gappa in Fresno at (559) 497-4000 or Assistant United States Attorney Laurel White in Sacramento at (916) 554-2700.

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